HW

James Earl Ray: Wrong Man in Jail

BY L. FLETCHER PROUTY

In a bare room, nine feet by six feet, sits a white man. He is small, somewhat sensitive, calm, and noncommittal. For four years this spare room has been his jail cell. For four years he has been in solitary, after his lawyer had pressured him into pleading guilty to the crime of shooting to death a black man—thus doing away with the need for a trial.

The prisoner's name is supposedly James Earl Ray, and the black man his lawyer said he killed in Memphis, Tennessee, was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But this man may not be the real James Earl Ray, and it is quite likely that he never shot King.

For the crime of murder, especially the murder of a man such as King (recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and a leader of his race in America), any man should go to jail for a long time. And for such a crime (after which more than fifty cities burned—three of which, including Washington, D.C., were seriously damaged) the state government and the federal government should have made sure that the accused had a full and complete trial, if only to put all details of the crime on the record and to remove beyond all doubt the possibility of a conspiracy. The primary objective here is not simply to convict the man said to be the killer; but to determine whether he acted as part of a conspiracy which continues after his incarceration.

James Earl Ray had no trial. In fact, the manner in which he was handled by the public prosecutors and the courts was reminiscent of the cases of Sirhan B. Sirhan (Robert Kennedy's convicted killer), Arthur Bremer (the convicted assailant of George Wallace), and Lee Harvey Oswald (the assumed slayer of John F. Kennedy), up to the time Oswald was shot while in the hands of the police. In all these cases the prosecution leaped to the opportunity to jail one man without devoting much effort to checking out the possibility of conspiracy.

In Ray's case, the evidence against him is, at best, questionable. If he had not been kept in solitary confinement for eight months before his trial (with bright lights glaring twenty-four hours a day in his windowless cell, television monitors watching him every moment, and microphones bugging even his private conversations with his lawyers), and if he had not been threatened and coerced by his lawyer, Percy Foreman, Ray certainly would not have permitted him to enter a plea of "guilty."

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Ray's case is typical of the others. Surrounding these four major cases are mystery and unreality, especially about how they were investigated and prosecuted. As I have said in an earlier article (*Genesis*, November 1974), Lee Harvey Oswald could hardly have been the killer of John F. Kennedy, and it is most unlikely that Ray, Sirhan, and Bremer all acted alone. The far greater crime in each of these cases has become the crime of the cover-up.

At a time when the house of cards constructed with great care by powerful men who have been running this country since the late 1950s has begun to crumble as a result of the blunders of Watergate, it becomes imperative that we press ever harder for government action to reveal these cover-ups, conspiracies, and related crimes.

Despite the many inconsistencies that surround the murders of the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, and the failed assassination of George Wallace, the government has acted as if there were no outstanding questions. In this sense, at least, the government has itself perpetrated these massive cover-ups.

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Individuals can't solve these crimes. Individuals who try to solve them, or at least to uncover parts of them, have run into governmental obstruction. No fewer than twenty-four persons who have tried to uncover data in the John Kennedy assassination, or who were witnesses of one kind of another connected with the crime, have died violent deaths since November 1963.

Still, individuals can tear away the more fragile veil of cover-up. The crime of Watergate has not been solved, and the government has done almost nothing to discover why those men really were in the Democratic National Committee headquarters, and why the "Dirty Tricks" team had been organized. But elaborate investigations have been underway to uncover the cover-up of Watergate. Nixon resigned because he had taken part in the cover-up, not because he had authorized the crime of Watergate.

And now in Memphis a few hardworking individuals are beginning to tear away at the cover-up of the King murder. After years of trying to get a court to permit them to plead for a new trial for Ray, three lawyers—Robert I. Livingston of Memphis, James Lesar of Washington, and Bernard Fensterwald of Washington—have finally persuaded the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to order a new hearing. This was not a trial. It was only a formal action to attempt to get Ray a trial.

During this hearing Ray said that Percy Foreman had threatened that he would be executed for King's murder if he did not plead guilty. (Ray had already fired one team of lawyers and had turned to Foreman in desperation.)

There are a number of strange elements in the Ray case that interest those who are trying to see that real justice is (continued on page 107).

porno. I have done props, camera work, sets and now I'm directing and producing my own films. I shall never be ashamed of my beginnings as a porno actor. I'm still the professional I was during my time in the legit theatre.

Gaver: You seem to have sexually done just about everything humanly possible in your films, what if any, would be your fantasy?

Reems: To find a woman who through some magical, chemical means could change her physical and emotional makeup from flat busted to busty, tall to short, young to old, just by request. I know that sounds chauvinistic and it is. So in turn I would hope to have the same magical powers to be able to transform myself to fulfill her every whim and wish.

Gaver: In your experience with all the super-stars of porno, Linda Lovelace, Tina Russell, Georgina Spelvin and Marilyn Chambers, which one makes you stand out the most?

Reems: I refuse to answer on the grounds that they may castrate me.

Gaver: All right, let's word it another way. If you had Linda Lovelace, Georgina Spelvin, Marilyn Chambers and Tina Russell all in the same room all available to you, based on your experience with them what would you do?

Reems: Volleyball anyone?

PROUTY

done. Much more than the trial of one man is at stake. If Fensterwald and the other lawyers can get a new trial, they will have succeeded in getting closer to the real conspiracy which appears to be behind King's murder. And if they succeed they will also move closer to a solution of the official cover-ups surrounding the deaths of the Kennedys and the attempt on George Wallace. These crimes will be hard to solve, especially if the government's prosecution is half-hearted and devious. But these cover-ups can be torn down, and will be. And as they begin to fall apart we will see that these crimes are related.

Anyone who has taken time to look into the King murder will have found that Ray, if he participated in the event at all, was little more than the errand boy for those who did the job. He was not the "mechanic."

There is much to be learned. Why, for example, has Ray been kept in solitary confinement for so long? It is prison lore that sometimes when a "select" prisoner is thrown into solitary and never seen by other inmates or by more than one or two guards, the prisoner may not even be in prison. If Ray was part of a powerful conspiracy and his incarceration is covering for others who are free and who wield great power, then might it not be true that he is not even in that cell? Who would ever know?

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